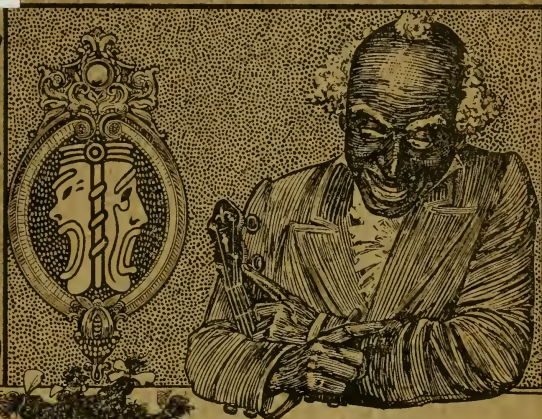


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A Dark Secret



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A DARK SECRET

A COLORED FARCE OF MYSTERY

BY

JEFF BRANEN

AUTHOR OF

"The Battle of Roaring Bull," "The Coon at the Door," "An Irish Alibi," "An Irish Stew," "How to Stage a Minstrel Show," "Denison's Minstrel Opening Choruses and Finales," Etc.



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

A DARK SECRET

CHARACTERS.

STONEWALL JOHNSON *A Colored*
..... *Baggage Hustler and a Self-Appointed Detective*
JEFFERSON DOOLITTLE
..... *STONEWALL'S Black Assistant and Chief Adviser*
AUBRAY HENSHAW *A Character Actor*
ANTHONY KETCHEM *A Pinkerton Man*
MADELINE LA BLANC *A Female Drummer*

TIME—*Between Three and Four, Any Afternoon.*

PLACE—*A Baggage Room.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Thirty Minutes.*

PROPERTIES.

Two large trunks, identical in make and color.
Miscellaneous bits of baggage.
Shakespearean wig in trunk Number One.
Artificial arm or leg in trunk Number Two.
Work table.
Telephone on work table.
Two chairs.
Maps and charts on walls.

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OCT 10 1921

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CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

west.
STONEWALL—Pompous, autocratic black-face, short and stocky, in striking contrast with Jefferson. Rather well dressed for a baggage hustler. Wears a concealed star.

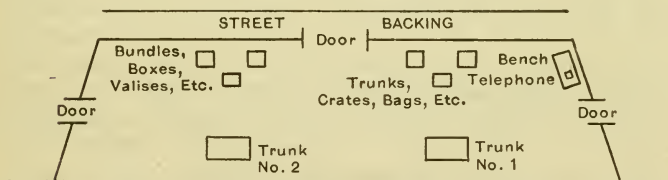
JEFFERSON—"Hick" black-face, tall and awkward. Loose fitting coat and baggy trousers. A weather-beaten straw hat or a crushed, faded, flat-top, narrow-brim derby or a shabby cap. Shoes several sizes too large and flat-footed; unpolished.

HENSHAW—Tall romantic man about thirty-five, deep-voiced to depict the legitimate thespian, dressed according to the times yet somewhat exaggerated to denote the ego of his profession.

KETCHEM—A sturdy looking man with short cropped moustache, dressed neatly but somewhat subdued to conceal his profession. His general appearance is in keeping with the times.

MADELINE—A portly woman of about thirty, dressed in tailor-made suit to give her an independent appearance.

SCENE PLOT.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; C., center; R. C., right center; L., left; 1 E., first entrance; U. E., upper entrance; R. 3 E., right entrance, up stage, etc.; up stage, away from footlights; down stage, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

A DARK SECRET

SCENE: *A baggage room in a railway station on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. Practical doors at R. and L. entrance. View of street through C. entrance. Charts and maps decorate the walls. Pieces of baggage, such as bundles, boxes, crates, valises and trunks, are scattered here and there. Two large trunks, Number One left, close to footlights, and Number Two, right, close to footlights. Trunks Number One and Two are to be identical in make and color.*

As curtain goes up, STONEWALL is seen sitting on large trunk, left, Number One, and JEFFERSON on large trunk, right, Number Two. Their faces are hidden behind newspapers which each is apparently reading. This piece of business must be reasonably well timed.

JEFFERSON (*lowering paper and addressing STONEWALL*). Don't yoh think yoh makin' a mistake?

STONEWALL (*lowering his paper and answering without looking at JEFFERSON*). I never make no mistake. (*Turning over a page and continuing to glance about for news.*)

JEFFERSON (*turning over a page of his paper as if under the influence of the other, glances here and there for news, finally lays paper aside and again addresses STONEWALL*). Yoh talkin' but yoh ain't said nothin'. Ev'ybody make mistakes sometimes, some of us all de time. Shiffin' dese here trunks 'round beats workin' in a liv'ry stable. Yoh better hang on to dis here job till yoh get somethin' better—

STONEWALL (*eyes still centered on paper*). I'm th'ough, I tell yoh. (*Lifting his head and giving JEFFERSON a forbidding look. Eyes turn back to paper.*) When I means a thing I says it.

JEFFERSON. What yoh all gwin' to do?

STONEWALL (*laying aside paper carelessly and turning attention to JEFFERSON*). Make a reputation foh maself.

See this? (*Throwing back the lapel of his coat, exposing an officer's gold imitation star.*)

JEFFERSON. Where yoh all get dat star?

STONEWALL (*forbiddingly*). S—s! (*Looks around baggage room as if to assure himself that no one is listening.* JEFFERSON betrays nervousness. Turns again to JEFFERSON.) S—h!

JEFFERSON. Hush yoh face wid dat s—h business! I don't like it—makes me nervous.

STONEWALL (*drawing a document from his pocket*). D'yoh see dis? (*Slaps the document in one hand effectively.*) Dis am my credentials.

JEFFERSON. Whatever dat means.

STONEWALL. I am resigning mah position here in dis baggage room to become a detective—secret service man perhaps.

JEFFERSON (*sliding down off trunk and betraying a little uneasiness*). Let me tell you all, Stonewall Johnson. I have no pa'ticular desire to associate wid police men, detectives or secret service men. Yoh and I have been friends foh a long time, but jest as quick as yoh go aroun' interferin' wid de pussonal liberties of anybody, den's when our friendship ceases.

STONEWALL. I feel very, very sorry foh yoh, Jefferson Doolittle—

JEFFERSON. 'Cou'se yoh duz! Why wouldn't yoh? Takin' advantage of mah friendship when yoh knows dat I knows dat yoh knows de exact location of ev'y dog-gone chicken-coop in dis part of de country.

STONEWALL. Oh, Jefferson, I shall not disturb thy meanderings. I'm no petty officer—besides, chicken stealin' is not a crime. (JEFFERSON, *somewhat reconciled*, sits back on trunk.)

JEFFERSON. I always treated it as such—took plenty of precaution—

STONEWALL. No, Doolittle—jest a black man's recreation.

JEFFERSON. Dat certainly am music to mah ears. By

de way, Stonewall, how yoh all come by dat star? Didn't steal it from somebody, did yoh?

STONEWALL. Doolittle—neveh use de word "*steal*" again in mah presence. I detest it. It's beneath mah dignity. If yoh insist on discussing crimes worthy of my degree of proficiency—let it be *murder*.

JEFFERSON (*springing down from trunk and batting eyes*). Stonewall, yoh ain't got no moh sense dan a rabbit.

STONEWALL (*again drawing document from inside coat pocket and slapping it in palm of hand*). I wouldn't insult mah alma mater by connecting mahseff wid a criminal case dat was any way short of *murder* or *high treason*.

JEFFERSON. Let me take a look at dat piece of paper yoh all boastin' about so much. (*Reaching for the document which STONEWALL relinquishes a little reluctantly.*)

STONEWALL. Be mighty careful how yoh handle dat!

JEFFERSON (*perusing document with considerable interest. Reading aloud*). Seekum & Soakum's Correspondence School of Crime and Crim—what am dat word, Stonewall?

STONEWALL. Criminology!

JEFFERSON. Correspondence school of crimes and criminology—what dat word mean, Stonewall?

STONEWALL. Do unto others as thou wouldst not have dem do unto yoh.

JEFFERSON. An' what yoh all call dis here? (*Referring to the document.*)

STONEWALL. Mah diploma.

JEFFERSON. Yoh all tryin' to tell me yoh graduated from dis here institution?

STONEWALL. Not tryin', merely insinuatn'.

JEFFERSON. What sote of school is a School of Correspondence?

STONEWALL. Dat am a school what take money foh axin' questions yoh can't answer and grantin' a license foh you to practice yoh profession anywhere but where yoh happen to be.

JEFFERSON. Is it expensive?

STONEWALL. Oh, very!

JEFFERSON. How much?

STONEWALL. Six bits to matriculate—dollar ninety-eight for de regular course—dollar fohty-nine foh de post-graduate—two bits foh de diploma and ten dollars and seventy-five foh de star, including wah tax. De star am gold plated, yoh know.

JEFFERSON. It sure do cost money nowadays to educate yohseff. (*Sighs.*) Does it take long to complete dis course?

STONEWALL. Very long.

JEFFERSON. Wish I had de money and could spare de time.

STONEWALL. Oh, Jefferson, it's entirely out of de question—yoh could never endure it. Fohteen days am moh dan most people can stand in college—besides, I can teach yoh all I know in ten minutes.

JEFFERSON. Can yoh?

STONEWALL. I shore can.

JEFFERSON. I's yoh man. I'm right here to listen to what yoh all got to say, providin' I get one of dem stars when yoh get through.

STONEWALL. Doolittle, yoh get moh dan dat. Yoh get yoh name coupled wid mine—Johnson & Doolittle's Detective Agency—experts in finger-prints, reprints and imprints.

JEFFERSON (*jumping down, laughing and handing back diploma to STONEWALL*). Wow! Some firm name! (*Laughs heartily.*) Go on wid yoh instruction—I sure am listenin'.

STONEWALL. To wear dis star and to become a member of mah firm yoh got to do zactly what I tell yoh. First, yoh must go out and most cunningly commit a *murder*. Take yoh time. Don't *murder* de fust person yoh see! Find yoh man, den find a dark spot where nobody sees yoh. (*JEFFERSON displays nervousness.*) After yoh dispose of de remains yoh den start covering up yoh tracks—makin' yoh git-away. At last when yoh all feel safe and secure beyond de far reachin' arm of de law, yoh den

turn detective and yoh start right in to unravel de murder yoh yohseff committed. Yoh begin right at de beginnin', first by takin' yoh own finger-prints, and yoh follow de tangled threads of disconnected circumstances until yoh have landed yohseff behind de bars—until yoh have had yohseff tried and convicted of *murder* in de first degree—until yoh have had yohseff sentenced to death. When at last yoh have been properly executed either by hanging or electrocution, yoh pay *me* de two bits foh de diploma and de ten seventy-five foh de star and yoh are sure eligible to become a full fledge member of mah firm.

JEFFERSON. De firm am dissolved befoh its orginization. (*Leaning back on the trunk and again picking up the paper and glancing through the contents.*)

STONEWALL. Meaning by dat?

JEFFERSON. Dat I don't intend to arrest myself and have myself convicted of *murder* in de first degree, executed either by hanging or electrocution jest to become a member of de firm of Johnson & Doolittle's Detective Agency. (*Looks sharply into paper.*) If yoh lookin' foh business, here's a murder foh yoh to unravel. (*Reads.*) Rosa Racoola, wife of Tony Racoola, an Italian fruit vender, found brutally murdered in de basement of her tenement home in de Italian quarters. Antonio Slavato, a boarder in de Racoola house, is supposed to—

STONEWALL. What's de matter wid yoh? Where yoh all get dat stuff? Tony Racoola, de husband of dat woman, was found guilty and executed over two years ago—what's de date of dat paper?

JEFFERSON (*turning to front page and reading*). Sept. 24th, 1914.

STONEWALL. Yoh sure am one fool niggah.

JEFFERSON. Where I get dis, anyhow? (*Examines paper and reflects.*) Oh, now I know. My mother-in-law sent it to my wife from Taladega, Alabama, last week. It was wrapped around a package of persimmons—

STONEWALL. De next issue, I suppose, will come out a couple of years from now.

JEFFERSON. Oh, I got de very latest issue of a New York paper here in my pocket—jest came in on dat last train. (*Laying aside the first paper, he pulls out the second one and starts to glance over it.*)

STONEWALL. What sayeth de headlines, Doolittle?

JEFFERSON (*turning over the pages*). Wait till I take a look at Mutt and Jeff.

STONEWALL. Is dat how yoh all get yoh information—from de pictures?

JEFFERSON (*laughing heartily*). Dis sure am funny, Stonewall. Jeff's dawg has a large ham-bone in his mouf. He is lookin' down into de water—growlin' an' barkin' at his shadow. He thinks it's another dawg—

STONEWALL. Doolittle, yoh crazy. How can a dawg wid a large ham-bone in his mouf growl and bark at hisself?

JEFFERSON (*closing paper and looking puzzled at STONEWALL*). Couldn't very well, could he?

STONEWALL. Course he couldn't!

JEFFERSON. But he does it in de picture.

STONEWALL. Did yoh all see his jaws move?

JEFFERSON. I could almost swear I did.

STONEWALL. 'Twas de paper what moved. (*Looks sharply at paper in JEFFERSON'S hand.*) I axed yoh—what does dat great big red headline say?

JEFFERSON (*looking at front page. With a start JEFFERSON springs to his feet.*) Here's yoh chance, Stonewall, to make *our* reputation. (*Reads.*) Another trunk mystery baffles the New York police. A young woman, a stranger in the city, mysteriously disappears from her place of residence, 1376 Amsterdam Avenue, where she has resided for the past two weeks. Bloodstains were found in her room and a large trunk (*here describe trunk to correspond with the two upon which STONEWALL and JEFFERSON sit*) supposed to contain her mutilated body was taken by an expressman from her apartment to the Grand Central Depot about seven o'clock last evening. About ten o'clock last night a man (*here describe HENSHAW*) called at the

baggage window and had the trunk checked out on his ticket either to Boston or some intermediate station on the New York, New Haven & Hartford. (*STONEWALL slips from the trunk upon which he has been sitting and shivers as he eyes it suspiciously.*) Such a man has been seen in the company of the young woman for at least a week previous to her disappearance. A reward of \$5,000 has been offered by the District Attorney's office for the arrest and conviction of the murderer; if in fact, a murder has really been committed. (*Slowly it begins to dawn upon JEFFERSON as he drops paper and eyes STONEWALL, that one of the two trunks upon which they have been sitting is the trunk in question. He, too, grows extremely nervous. Together they both tiptoe about the trunk Number One—to left—dropping on their hands and knees to eye the lock and search for bloodstains. JEFFERSON reaches out timidly to feel the lock—*)

STONEWALL. Doolittle! (*JEFFERSON falls back but quickly scrambles to his feet.*)

JEFFERSON. Don't do dat! I'm nervous.

STONEWALL. Open it, Doolittle!

JEFFERSON (*stepping to a safe distance*). Open it yo-seff. Yoh am de law man.

STONEWALL. Yoh am a member of de firm of Johnson & Doolittle, ain't yoh?

JEFFERSON. Noh-sir! There never was, never is or there's never goin' to be such a detective firm—(*batting eyes and viewing trunk.*)

STONEWALL. (*With considerable bravado as he strikes attitude.*) Dat am de trunk in question. I tell yoh, Doolittle, de five thousand dollars am as good as in my pocket—

JEFFERSON. Fat chance of me spendin' any of it if it's in yoh pocket.

STONEWALL. Our reputation am made.

JEFFERSON. Never mind 'bout *our* reputation. I don't care a dog-gone 'bout reputation. Wouldn't know what to do with one if I had it. (*JEFFERSON observes STONEWALL eyeing trunk Number Two and comparing it with Number*

One by transfer of glances.) What de matter wid yoh all? Can't yoh keep yoh suspicions to yohseff?

STONEWALL. Just to think—a dead woman in one of dem trunks. Who knows but dat there may be one in each of dem?

JEFFERSON. Go on—stop yoh foolishness! I tell yoh I'm nervous.

STONEWALL. Why should yoh be nervous? (*Betraying nervousness himself.*) Dead people won't hurt yoh.

JEFFERSON. No—but dey make yoh hurt yohseff.

STONEWALL. Yoh sure am one crazy niggah.

JEFFERSON. I may be crazy, but I ain't no fool. Detective—secret service—who wants to be a detective?

STONEWALL. Think of de five thousand dollars yoh liable to lose.

JEFFERSON. Five thousand dollars! Ain't no such money in de world. 'Sides, who's liable to lose somethin' dey ain't never had? Yoh talk about me being crazy—(STONEWALL still eyes trunk Number Two).

STONEWALL. Wouldn't surprise me if one-half of her was in dat trunk and de other in dis.

JEFFERSON. There yoh go, stretchin' yoh imagination.

STONEWALL. Den again she may all be in dat one. (*Pointing to Number Two.*)

JEFFERSON. What difference does it make to de lady which trunk she's in?

STONEWALL. Jefferson, yoh stupidity amazes me. When de murder man comes to claim his trunk, how can we claim de reward if de body happens to be in de other trunk?

JEFFERSON. Dat's a little deep. Jest repeat dat again.

STONEWALL. I say, when de murder man comes to claim his trunk—

AUBRAY HENSHAW *enters, center. Both JEFFERSON and STONEWALL see him as he advances, apparently a little nervous.*

STONEWALL. Dat's him! Dat's him!

JEFFERSON. Sure, dat's him. Yoh take care of him—I'm goin'. (*Starts to exit center.*)

HENSHAW (*confronting* JEFFERSON.) I'm after my trunk.

JEFFERSON. Oh, yes—we all been expectin' yoh. (HENSHAW *displays claim check.*) Give it to him—he'll take care of yoh.

HENSHAW (*turning to* STONEWALL *with claim check*). Come, I'm in a hurry.

STONEWALL. Come back here and wait on dis man, Doolittle! He says he's in a hurry.

JEFFERSON. I'll jess stand here and watch yoh wait on him, Stonewall.

HENSHAW. I have no time to listen to your argument as to who shall serve me.

DOOLITTLE. Yoh all goin' to hear a whole lot of arguments befoh yoh die (*coming forward and pointing to trunk Number One*). Dhere's what yoh after.

HENSHAW (*going to trunk indicated*). No, I'm not after it—just want to get something out of it. (*Draws keys from pocket and starts to open the trunk. STONEWALL and JEFFERSON scramble for positions to look into trunk as lid is lifted. HENSHAW suddenly turns and catches them in the act. They scramble to their feet and try to assume an indifferent attitude. HENSHAW again turns to his trunk and STONEWALL and JEFFERSON again fall to their hands and knees to peck under the lid as it is lifted. STONEWALL is in a position to see, but JEFFERSON is obstructed by HENSHAW. The lid is lifted and with a shriek STONEWALL springs to his feet. HENSHAW slams back the lid, locks the trunk and turns savagely upon the two.*) What's eating you two idiots?

STONEWALL. Doolittle, do yoh duty! (JEFFERSON *is ready for the arrest.*) Under de name of de commonwealth of dis here state yoh may consider yohseff under arrest! (*flashing star.*)

JEFFERSON. Yes, boss, consider yohseff our prisoner.

HENSHAW. Arrest? For what?

STONEWALL and JEFFERSON (*in unison*). Murder!

HENSHAW. Murder? You're crazy.

STONEWALL. Dat what dey all say when dey get caught in de act. Come on, Jefferson. (*They pounce upon HEN-*

SHAW and haul and drag him to left door, push him through and lock the door. HENSHAW puts up a terrible howl—protesting vigorously and pounding door to get out.) Go on—holler yoh fool head off!

HENSHAW (*off stage*). Let me out, I say—let me out.

JEFFERSON (*as he and STONEWALL come panting to center*). Did yoh see her?

STONEWALL. Did I? There was de top of her poor head sticking up. (JEFFERSON *trembles from head to foot*.)

JEFFERSON. I'm goin'. (*Starting up stage*.)

STONEWALL. Doolittle, come back here. Not with five thousand dollars reward is yoh all gwin' away from here—

JEFFERSON (*coming back all smiles*). Lah, man, I almost fohgot de reward.

STONEWALL (*going to telephone and picking it up*). De firm of Johnson & Doolittle am gwin' to do some business from now on. Give me long distance, please.

JEFFERSON. Work long time at dis here job befoh we make five thousand good semolians.

STONEWALL. Five thousand years. (HENSHAW *pounds on door and hollers to get out*.) Long distance, please. Dis long distance? Give me de district attorney's office, New York * * * I cain't tell yoh all de number * * * Norwalk 2306 * * * Stonewall Johnson * * * all right, Miss * * * (*Hangs up receiver*. HENSHAW *pounds and* JEFFERSON *is curious to know who* STONEWALL *is calling*.)

JEFFERSON. Yoh git yoh party? (STONEWALL *is eyeing the other trunk and* HENSHAW *still pounds*.) Ah, shut up dat noise. (*To* STONEWALL.) Yoh git yoh party, I axed. (*Telephone rings*.)

STONEWALL (*hurrying to telephone and picking up the receiver*). Hello. This is yoh man. Stonewall Johnson * * * Yoh trunk mystery is solved * * * Yassir * * * Got de man under lock and key and got de trunk and body right here in mah possession. * * * Double murder! (*Receiver falls from hand and he grapples with it and slams it to car*.) 'Nother trunk mystery? We got

dat trunk, too. What's my name? Stonewall Johnson, detective and secret service agency, Norwalk, Connecticut.

JEFFERSON. Say, Stonewall, ain't yoh forgettin' somebody?

STONEWALL. Never heard of such a man? Well, yoh goin' to hear more about him * * * All I want from yoh am de five thousand dollars reward in each case * * * I don't care nothin' 'bout no Pinkerton man * * * I got one and I'll have de other before yoh Pinkerton shows up * * * I claim de reward foh both, and when I gets it yoh can have yoh prisoners and yoh trunks. * * * Good-bye. (*Hangs up and comes to center, JEFFERSON studying him.*)

JEFFERSON. So de firm name am no longer Johnson & Doolittle.

STONEWALL. Yoh lack de proper credentials. When yoh have complied wid de necessary fulfillments of de law, den yoh can become a member of my agency.

JEFFERSON. And we don't split de five thousand?

STONEWALL. No, Jefferson—nor do we split de ten thousand dat comes when *we* land de owner of dat trunk (*pointing to Number Two*). Dat also am, according to de state's attorney's office, wanted at headquarters for de mystery surrounding it. (*JEFFERSON becomes frightened.*)

JEFFERSON. Now, here's where I *do* go. (*Starting for center exit to be confronted by MADELINE LA BLANC, a masculine looking woman attired in tailor-made costume.*)

MADELINE *enters boldly*. JEFFERSON *retreats before her as she comes dozen center*.

MADELINE. Which of these is mine?

STONEWALL. Ask him—he knows. (*Pointing to JEFFERSON.*)

MADELINE (*turning to JEFFERSON*). I merely want to get something out of it.

JEFFERSON (*pointing to Number Two*). I reckon dis one here is what yoh all after.

MADELINE (*commanding JEFFERSON, who appears fright-*

ened). Take hold of it and swing it around to the light so I can see!

JEFFERSON (*very much excited*). Oh, lady—lady—dat am very much against de orders of de freight-handlers' union—yoh will have to handle yoh trunk yohseff. (*Both JEFFERSON and STONEWALL shift to positions of advantage as MADELINE, after giving JEFFERSON a terrible look, grabs trunk and jerks it around where she can have a better view of same. They look at each other, amazed, and betray great nervousness as she starts fumbling with keys and fooling with lock of trunk. Both get down on one knee to be in a position to see. MADELINE turns abruptly upon them.*)

MADELINE. What's the matter with you fellows? Feet itchy?

JEFFERSON. His am—but mine, jess a little cold, dat's all.

MADELINE (*turning her attention again to trunk, she fumbles with lock. Both JEFFERSON and STONEWALL are on their knees, and as MADELINE lifts lid of trunk both spring to their feet, JEFFERSON with a shriek. MADELINE slams down lid of trunk and turns upon them.*) I refuse to tolerate such impertinence—I shall report you to your company!

STONEWALL. Clam yohseff, lady—clam yohseff—

JEFFERSON. Yes, lady—jes' give de man time to place yoh under arrest. (*Heavy pounding upon door by HENSHAW. MADELINE looks sharply at door, then first at STONEWALL, then JEFFERSON.*)

STONEWALL. Yes, lady—we all want to arrest yoh—

MADELINE. Arrest? What for? (*Looking threateningly at JEFFERSON.*)

JEFFERSON. Not me, lady—I'm not in de arrestin' business—it's him—he's yoh man.

MADELINE. I ask you! For what am I under arrest?

STONEWALL. Oh, nothin' much, lady—jes' merely murder, das all.

MADELINE. You poor shrimps—let me pass! (*Brushing them aside.*) Let me pass, I say! (*JEFFERSON and STONEWALL have recovered their bearings and rush after*

her as she starts for door. She wheels upon them and they fall over each other trying to get away. She follows them to corner of stage, glaring at them as they stand wilting and shivering.) I've a good notion to take you two idiots and bump your heads together.

JEFFERSON. Tain't ouh fault, lady, if yoh break de law—

STONEWALL. No, lady—we jes' performin' a duty, das all.

JEFFERSON (*to* MADELINE). He is—not me—he's de law man.

STONEWALL (*to* MADELINE). Don't yoh believe him. He's a part of de company.

JEFFERSON. Since when am I part of de company?

STONEWALL. From dis minute on.

JEFFERSON. I never saw such a man—yoh dissolve and reorganize dis company of ours jess whenever yoh all feel like it.

STONEWALL (*more pounding by HENSHAW attracts MADELINE's attention*). Get ready, Doolittle. (*JEFFERSON prepares to make arrest. Both steal up behind MADELINE and pounce on her. They pick her up bodily and run away with her to right door, her feet kicking and she pulling their hair and shrieking hysterically. They rush her into room and hurriedly lock the door and come to front of stage.*) What did yoh all see in de trunk, Doolittle?

JEFFERSON (*between breaths as he puffs*). She sure am some lady to handle.

STONEWALL. I am axing yoh—what did yoh all see in de trunk?

JEFFERSON (*having forgetfully seated himself on trunk Number Two, springs to his feet and looks horrified at trunk*). De arm and de bare leg of a woman. (*Pounding at both doors, left and right.*)

STONEWALL. Ten thousand dollars reward! Ev'y dollar of it belongs to me.

JEFFERSON. Where do I fit in?

STONEWALL. De arrests are made—now I don't need yoh, Jefferson Doolittle.

JEFFERSON (*starting to exit center*). I hopes yoh enjoy yohseff wid all dat money, Mr. Johnson.

STONEWALL. Where yoh goin'?

JEFFERSON. Back to mah first love—de liv'y stable. (*Starts to exit center.*)

Enters ANTHONY KETCHEM, who walks to the trunks and examines them. JEFFERSON tries to make his escape after first falling back before KETCHEM.

KETCHEM. Come back here! (*Reaching back toward hip pocket.*) Where these trunks come from—who owns them—why are you holdin' them—(*pounding on the two doors*)—who's pounding—how long those people been in there? Somebody answer me.

JEFFERSON. Which question will we answer?

KETCHEM. Don't get fresh. I've heard something about you fellows passing yourselves off as secret service men—impersonating an officer without the—(*pounding*).

JEFFERSON. No, sir—not me—I no policeman—no nothin'—I ain't nobody—jes' my plain seff—he (*pointing to STONEWALL*) am de whole works around here. He's de law man—he carry de star—he am Stonewall Johnson—(*more pounding*).

KETCHEM. What are these people pounding for?

JEFFERSON. To get out. He arrested dem for murder.

KETCHEM. Let them out. (*STONEWALL, subservient, and JEFFERSON, frightened, go to the opposite doors and release HENSHAW and MADELINE. They come storming out, protesting vigorously.*)

MADLINE. An outrage—

HENSHAW. Ten thousand dollars for false imprisonment. (*STONEWALL and JEFFERSON tremble.*)

KETCHEM. There has been some mistake here, I believe. Who arrested you?

MADLINE. These two baboons!

JEFFERSON. No, lady—not me—him—

KETCHEM. For what were you arrested?

STONEWALL (*with returning courage.*) For murder. In each of dem trunks dere am a body of a woman. I saw de

top of a lady's head in dis one (*points to Number One*) and he saw de leg and arm of a woman in dat (*points to Number Two*). I arrested them (*displaying his star*) and I wants my reward. (MADELINE and HENSHAW *shriek with laughter. Recognize each other and fall into each other's arms.*)

MADELINE. Aubray!

HENSHAW. Madeline!

AUBRAY and MADELINE (*together*). What are you doing here?

KETCHEM (*to HENSHAW and MADELINE*). Open up those trunks and let's see what's in them. (*Both look scowlingly at KETCHEM, but open trunks simultaneously, each bringing forth the circumstantial evidence—HENSHAW his character wig and MADELINE an artificial limb. STONEWALL faints and JEFFERSON looks to make his escape.*)

MADELINE. I'm a sales lady—selling artificial limbs—in other words, a drummer.

HENSHAW. And I'm at the Opera House tonight, playing.

KETCHEM (*turning to STONEWALL*). And I'm a Pinkerton man, and you're under arrest for impersonating an officer.

JEFFERSON (*close to center exit*). And I'm goin' back to de liv'y stable. De firm am dissolved.

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